

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GEORGE 01695 251303Z

53

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 AGR-05 CIEP-01 TRSE-00

/077 W

----- 116666

R 251159Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3298

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1695

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, ECON, GY

SUBJECT: POLITICIZED LABOR DISPUTE DELAYS AUTUMN SUGAR HARVEST

SUMMARY: DESPITE THE GOG'S NATIONALIZATION OF THE REMAINDER OF GUYANA'S SUGAR INDUSTRY THIS YEAR, SUGAR WORKERS HERE CONTINUE THEIR CUSTOM OF STRIKING AT HARVEST TIME. ALTHOUGH THE NEWLY RE-COGNIZED SUGAR WORKERS UNION, THE GUYANA AGRICULTURAL AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION (GAWU-- DOMINATED BY CHEDDI JAGAN'S MOSCOW-LINE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY), HAS CALLED ON ITS MEMBERS TO RETURN TO THE FIELDS WHILE THE UNION NEGOTIATES WITH THE GOVT-OWNED GUYANA SUGAR CORPORATION (GUYSUCO), STRIKES ON SOME SUGAR ESTATES, INSTEAD, CONTINUE. WHILE SOME OF THE GRIEVANCES ARE GENUINE LABOR ISSUES, OTHERS ARE POLITICALLY AND RACIALLY MOTIVATED. THE LATTER ARE THE ISSUES WHICH COULD SOLIDIFY THE WORKERS, WITH PROMPTING FROM GAWU, AND BRING ABOUT A GENERAL STRIKE IN THIS IMPORTANT INDUSTRY WHICH COULD PROVE DISASTROUS FOR GUYANA'S ECONOMY. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE THE GOG NATIONALIZED THE REMAINDER OF THIS NATION'S

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GEORGE 01695 251303Z

SUGAR INDUSTRY THIS YEAR, WORKERS' EXPECTATIONS HAVE RISEN RAPIDLY.

ALTHOUGH THE GOG HAS, ACCORDING TOMOST OBSERVERS, STEADILY INCREASED BENEFITS FOR THE SUGAR WORKERS, LOCALIZED PROBLEMS CONTINUE TO APPEAR ON THE VARIOUS ESTATES. THE SUGAR WORKERS ARE REACTING, AS THEY DID WHEN THE INDUSTRY WAS UNDER PRIVATE CONTROL, WITH ISOLATED STRIKES.

2. CANE-CUTTERS, IN SEVERAL INSTANCES SUPPORTED BY THE FACTORY WORKERS' AND HEADMEN'S UNIONS, HAD AT ONE POINT WALKED-OFF THE JOB ON FIVE SUGAR ESTATES. THEY NOW REMAIN ON STRIKE AT TWO ESTATES WHOSE NORMAL PRODUCTION EQUALS NEARLY 25 PERCENT OF THE NATION'S TOTAL SUGAR CROP. THEIR MAJOR GRIEVANCES INCLUDE DISSATISFACTION OVER THE RATE OF PAY, THE TERMS OF A PROPOSED BONUS, AND DISCRIMINATION IN HIRING AND JOB ASSIGNMENTS.

3. NEGOTIATIONS REPORTEDLY ARE BEING HAMPERED BY THE INJECTION OF POLITICAL AND RACIAL ISSUES INTO THE DISPUTE. THE DISCRIMINATION ISSUE IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST VOLATILE, AS GAWU SUPPORTERS (THE VAST MAJORITY OF WHOM ARE EAST INDIANS) CHARGE THAT SINCE NATIONALIZATION OF THE SUGAR INDUSTRY, SUPPORTERS OF THE RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC -- GENERALLY BLACKS) HAVE BEEN RECEIVING PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT.

4. ONE TOP-LEVEL GUYSUCO OFFICIAL PREDICTS THAT GAWU WILL FOMENT A GENERAL STRIKE FOR POLITICAL REASONS BY OCTOBER, THE CRUCIAL PRODUCTION PERIOD. THESE ISOLATED STRIKES WILL SUPPOSEDLY BE USED IN THE MEANTIME TO HAMPER RODUCTION AND SO POLITICALLY EMBARRASS AND ECONOMICALLY HURT THE GOG.

5. ARMED RIOT SQUAD POLICE AND GUYANA DEFENSE FORCE SOLDIERS HAVE BEEN ROUTINELY SENT TO AT LEAST ONE ESTATE. WORKERS COMPLAIN OF HARASSMENT BY THE AUTHORITIES, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS YET OF VIOLENCE.

6. COMMENT: GAWU CLAIMS THAT IT CAN CONTROL ITS MEMBERS, BUT IT REMAINS EITHER UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO GET THEM BACK TO WORK. IN THE CASE OF ONE OF THE ESTATES, WE BELIEVE THE FORMER TO BE TRUE WITH THE WORKERS FORCING GAWU TO SUPPORT THEIR CHARGE OF PNC DISCRIMINATION. IF GAWU FEELS THAT WOWRKERS ON THE REMAINING ESTATES WOULD ALSO SUPPORT A STRIKE, THE GUYSUCO OFFICIAL'S CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 GEORGE 01695 251303Z

PREDICTION MIGHT WELL BE REALIZED. IF SO, THE GUYANESE ECONOMY, ALREADY WEAKENED BY A DISASTROUS RICE CROP CAUSED PRIMARILY BY BAD WEATHER, WOULD BE EVEN MORE SERIOUSLY DISRUPTED BLACKEN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SUGAR, INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION, LABOR DISPUTES, LABOR STRIKES, LABOR DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976GEORGE01695
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760324-0698
From: GEORGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760822/aaaaasow.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <08 JUL 2004 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICIZED LABOR DISPUTE DELAYS AUTUMN SUGAR HARVEST SUMMARY: DESPITE THE GOG'S NATIONALIZATION OF THE
REMAINDER OF GUYANA'S SUGAR INDUSTRY THIS YE AR, SUGAR WORKERS H
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, ECON, GY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006